

What is claimed is:

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1. A method of providing media content to a caller on hold in a call placed across a communications network between first and second locations, said first location having a first call control unit associated therewith and said second location having a second call control unit associated therewith, said caller being at said second location and communicating with the first location by means of a telephony terminal, said method carried out by the second call control unit and comprising the steps of:
  - a) detecting that the call has been placed on hold by the first call control unit; and
  - b) activating a media content generator associated with said second location to thereby provide locally generated media content to the telephony terminal while the caller is on hold.
2. A method according to claim 1, wherein said step of detecting comprises receiving a signal from the first call control unit that the call has been placed on hold.
3. A method according to claim 1, wherein said media content generator comprises an audio source associated with the second call control unit.
4. A method according to claim 1, wherein said media content generator comprises an audio source associated with said telephony terminal.
5. A method according to claim 4, wherein said audio source comprises a memory for storing audio content and a playback unit, both the memory and the playback unit forming part of said terminal.

6. A method according to claim 1, wherein said media content generator comprises an Internet connection associated with said telephony terminal, and wherein said locally generated media content is accessed from a remote Internet site before being presented to said caller at said telephony terminal.
7. A method according to claim 1, wherein said telephony terminal, said second call control unit and said media content generator are each connected to a local area network (LAN) which is connected to said communications network.
8. A method according to claim 7, wherein said communications network is a packet-based network, and wherein said call is conducted using a first codec, said method further comprising the step of causing said telephony terminal to switch to a second codec while receiving content from said media content generator.
9. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of receiving telephony signals from the first location while the call is on hold and mixing said received telephony signals with the media content from the local media content generator.
10. A method according to claim 1, wherein the first and/or second call control unit(s) comprise a private branch exchange.
11. A method of holding a call placed across a communications network between a first location having a first call control unit associated therewith and a second location having a second call control unit associated therewith, said method carried out by the first call control unit and comprising the steps of:
- a) placing the call into an on-hold state; and
  - b) signalling to the second call control unit that the call is on-hold, whereby said second call control unit can provide locally generated media content to said second location while the call remains on hold.

12. A method according to claim 11, further comprising the subsequent steps of:

c) placing the call from the on-hold state into an active state; and

d) signalling to the second call control unit that the call is active, whereby

5 said second control unit can finish providing locally generated media content to said second location.

13. A method as claimed in claim 11, further comprising the step, carried out by the second call control unit on receipt of the signal from the first call control unit that the call is on hold, of activating a media content generator associated with said second location to thereby provide locally generated media content to the telephony terminal while the caller is on hold.

14. A computer program product in machine readable form containing instructions which when executed cause a call control unit to:

a) detect that a call made between a telephony terminal under the control of the call control unit and a remote location has been placed on hold at said remote location; and

b) activate a media content generator associated with said call control unit to thereby provide locally generated media content to the telephony terminal while the caller is on hold.

15. A computer program product in machine readable form containing instructions which when executed cause a call control unit to:

a) place a call under the control of the call control unit on hold; and

b) generate a signal to a remote location to which the call is connected indicating that the call is on hold.

A 16. A call server comprising:

a) a call control unit for maintaining control of a call between a telephony terminal associated with the server and a remote location to which the terminal is connected via a communications network;

5 b) a detector for detecting that a call in which the terminal is involved has been placed on hold at a remote location; and

c) a media content generation actuator for actuating a media content generator associated with the call server to thereby provide media content to the telephony terminal while the call is on hold.

10 17. A call server as claimed in claim 16, wherein said server is selected from a private branch exchange (PBX) or a public switched telephony network (PSTN) exchange.

18. A telephony terminal having an associated media content generator and a media control unit for activating said generator and switching the output thereof  
15 into the voice channel of a call in which the terminal is involved on receipt of a signal that said call is on hold at a remote location.

19. A call control signal comprising an electronic indication that an identified call has been placed on hold, said signal being adapted for transmission from a call control unit associated with the telephony equipment at which the call has  
20 been placed on hold, to a remote location across a communications network.

A 20. A communications network including a call server, wherein said call server comprises:

a) a call unit for maintaining control of a call between a telephony terminal associated with the server and a remote location to which the terminal is  
25 connected via said communications network;

- b) a detector for detecting that a call in which the terminal is involved has been placed on hold at a remote location; and
- c) a media content generation actuator for actuating a media content to the telephony terminal while the call is on hold.

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